

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congressman Jason Altmire (PA-04) returned today from a week-long Congressional Delegation (CODEL) to Slovakia, Georgia, Yemen, Djibouti, and Spain. The bipartisan delegation was led by Congressman Bill Shuster (PA-09). Altmire was the lead Democrat on the trip.

"Given the precarious state of the Arabian Peninsula, it is imperative that our military and its allies continue to work to keep this region as secure as possible. I am grateful to have witnessed the strong relationship our armed forces have with the Slovak and Georgian militaries, and we all remain committed to the long-term stability of the area," Congressman Altmire said.

Independence Day was spent celebrating with embassy and military personnel, many of whom were from western Pennsylvania, deployed as part of the Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA). **"I was most thankful to spend Independence Day overseas with our troops. I was glad to have the opportunity to thank them for their dedication in person, and I will continue to work to ensure that we don't forget their service upon their return,"** Altmire said. During their stop, the delegation also took the opportunity to meet with senior military leaders in Djibouti to discuss ongoing efforts to improve security in eastern Africa.

Prior to their arrival in Djibouti, Altmire and the delegation arrived in Sana'a, Yemen to meet with President Abdo Rabbo Mansour Hadi. There they surveyed the delicate security situation on the Arabian Peninsula firsthand, and President Hadi shared the progress the Yemeni government is making toward limiting the opportunity for al-Qaeda safe havens.

Earlier in the week, the delegation met with senior uniformed and civilian officials in Slovakia and took time to recognize the significant commitment of the Slovak military in Afghanistan.

Slovak leaders were especially interested in the delegation's Pittsburgh ties. The Pittsburgh Agreement, signed in 1918 at the Loyal Order of Moose Hall in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, created the state of Czecho-Slovakia. U.S. Steel, founded and headquartered in Pittsburgh, is one of Slovakia's largest employers while Westinghouse, which also had its start in Pittsburgh, is one of the contenders to build a new reactor in Slovakia.

The group then traveled to Tbilisi, Georgia, and the Congressmen were briefed on the status of the upcoming national elections by both President Mikheil Saakashvili and leaders of the opposition. These meetings also included discussions of Georgia's contentious relationship with Russia and the impact of the recent decision by the President to replace Georgia's prime minister, Nikoloz Gilauri, with Interior Minister Ivane Merabishvili . Before departing, the delegation met with Marines at the United States Marine Corps training facility for Georgian soldiers who are headed to Afghanistan.

The last day of the trip was spent at the Naval Station (NavSta) in Rota, Spain. They met with senior Navy officials and were briefed further on the evolving situation with Somali pirates; most Navy ships going to and from eastern Africa stop in Rota. NavSta Rota houses U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps personnel.

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